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ABSTRACT

Designed to assess the ability to interpret the major types of figurative language or tropes such as similes, metaphors, proverbs, and personification, the two forms of this instrument each contain 50 items in a two-part, multiple-choice format. Part I tests the meaning of figures of speech in isolation; part II tests the meaning in the context of a sentence(s). In both parts, the reader is required to select which of four possible answer choices represents the most common meaning for each figure of speech. To aid the reader, figurative statements are underlined, no figurative statements are contained in the answer choices, the test is untimed, and the test items are written at or below the fifth grade readability level. Validity, reliability, and normative data are included. (This document is one of those reviewed in The Research Instruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts, Volume 2," published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. The TRIP review, included here as an introduction to the instrument, describes the instrument's category (reading), title, author, date, age range (intermediate to postsecondary and adult basic education), purpose, and physical characteristics.) (JL)

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ED236668

Smith/Palmer Figurative Language Interpretation Test.

The measurement instruments contained in this document have been reviewed in a monograph (cited below) edited by William T. Fagan, Charles Cooper, and Julie Jensen, for The Research Instruments Project (TRIP), and funded by a grant from the Trustees of the NCTE Research Foundation:

Measures for Research and Evaluation
in the
English Language Arts
Volume II

The purpose of the editors has been to select and review measurement instruments pertaining to all aspects of research and evaluation in the English language arts, e.g. language and language development, literacy, literature, reading (including comprehension, teacher-pupil interaction, etc.), writing, and teacher knowledge and attitudes. In order to make some of the actual instruments reviewed more readily available, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) has cooperated with the editors by processing selected instruments into the ERIC system (see the 42 documents assigned Clearinghouse accession numbers CS 207 904-945).

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CS207943

Category: Reading

Title: Smith/Palmer Figurative Language Interpretation Test

Authors: Edwin H. Smith
Barbara C. Palmer

Age Range: Intermediate to Post-Secondary (including Adult Basic Education Students).

Description of the Instrument:

Purpose: To assess the ability to interpret the major types of figurative language or tropes such as similes, metaphors, proverbs, and personification.

Date of Construction: 1979

Physical Description: The figures of speech used in the Smith/Palmer Figurative Language Interpretation Test items were selected from those found in basal reader series, Sutherland's (1973) recommended trade books, Brewer's (1978) Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, and Bartlett's (1968) Familiar Quotations, Fourteenth Edition, plus newspapers and magazines such as Time and Newsweek. The pilot version of the test contained two equal parts of 50 items each--part one tested the meaning of the figures of speech in isolation; part two in the context of a sentence(s). (See the sample items at the end of this section.) In both parts the reader was required to select which of four possible answer choices represented the most common meaning for each figure of speech. The test was not timed. To minimize other comprehension difficulties, all test items were written at or below the fifth grade readability level, using the EDL Revised Core Vocabulary (1969). All figurative statements were also excluded from answer choices. Also, the figurative statements were underlined as an aid to the reader. At the end of the pilot study, based on a detailed item analysis, the instrument was revised and the 100 improved items were randomly divided into Form A and Form B with 50 items each. Within each of the tests the original part one/two, multiple-choice format was retained.

Part I:

Walking on air means feeling:

A. impatient
B. careful
C. joyful
D. careless

Part II:

Just by listening to the two of them, you could see that they were painted with the same brush. They were:

A. very much alike
B. both young
C. sisters
D. relatives

Validity, Reliability, and Normative Data:

Content validity was established for the Smith/Palmer Figurative Language Interpretation Test by selecting a large number of figures of speech from basal reader series and trade books; these were supplemented by selections from the works of Sutherland, Brewer, and Bartlett. These sources were chosen because of their common usage. In addition, the content and format was compared with similar instruments such as those found in the dissertations of Muller (1976) and Hartman (1978). After a detailed item analysis, the 100 item test was revised and the improved items were randomly divided into two forms of the test with 50 items each.

Reliability as assessed by the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20, on three occasions yielded coefficients of .83, .84, and .76.

The mean performance on the 100 item test for a sample of grade seven, eight, and nine students was 40.40 with a standard deviation of 10.61 and a standard error of measurement of 4.43. For a group of teachers enrolled in a graduate reading extension course, the mean was 82.45 with a standard deviation of 4.55 and a standard error of 3.11. The administration of each form (50 items) with adult basic education students yielded a mean of 27.89 with a standard deviation of 7.59 and a standard error of 3.06 for Form A, while for Form B, the statistics were 27.80, 6.11, and 3.01.

Related References:

Bartlett, John. Familiar Quotations, Fourteenth Edition. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968.

Brewer, E. Cobham. The Dictionary of Phrase and Fable. New York: Avenel Books, 1978.

Hartman, Sharon D. "An Investigation of the Precision of Metaphorical Language Interpretation of Students in Grades Six and Nine." Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1978.

Muller, Dorothy H. "An Investigation of the Precision of Metaphorical Language Interpretation of Students in Grades Four through Seven". Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1976.

Smith, Edwin H., and Palmer, Barbara C. Figuring Out Figurative Language. Project AS9-13: Implementing a Model for Increasing Reading Comprehension of Adult Basic Education Students, Florida Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida, 1979.

Sutherland, Zena. The Best in Children's Books: The University of Chicago Guide to Children's Literature 1966-1972. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973. (ED 085 767)

SMITH/PALMER

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION TEST

FORM A

Part I

Directions: Read each item carefully. You will see that the part containing a figure of speech is underlined. Choose the most common meaning for each figure of speech. Record your choice on the answer sheet. Two examples are given below.

Examples:

To have a heart of gold means to be:

(A.) kind
B. heavy
C. rich
D. hard

To give it to him straight means to:

A. deliver it yourself
B. pay him right now
C. send it unfolded
(D.) tell him the truth

Begin Part I

1. Drop me a line means:

A. throw me the line
B. give me the news
C. write me a letter
D. tell me a story

2. As green as grass means:

A. unclean
B. inexpensive
C. untrained
D. incorrect

3. The wind whispered means the wind was:

A. cool
B. fierce
C. warm
D. gentle

4. Fire in her eyes means:

   A. pain
   B. rage
   C. disappointment
   D. trouble

5. A stomach of iron means:

   A. a heavy stomach
   B. a tough stomach
   C. an upset stomach
   D. an aching stomach

6. Fine feathers make fine birds means:

   A. nice clothes make the person
   B. good appearance makes a person feel good
   C. well-dressed people have money
   D. good looks make happy people

7. From the old school means with:

   A. an old classmate
   B. old teachers
   C. little education
   D. out-of-date ideas

8. Birds of a feather flock together means people:

   A. look for others like themselves
   B. should be alike
   C. should join groups
   D. are different

9. Spilled the beans means:

   A. admitted a lie
   B. advised the police
   C. told the secret
   D. made a mess

10. Has two left feet means:

    A. disturbed
    B. uncertain
    C. clumsy
    D. different

11. Down and out means:

    A. having a hard time
    B. feeling dead tired
    C. being unhappy
    D. doing nothing

12. Crack the case means:

A. solve the mystery
B. make an arrest
C. find a suspect
D. follow all leads

13. Got his walking papers means:

A. was fired
B. got his license
C. passed the examination
D. won the contest

14. The saying, "that will be no sweat," means that it will be:

A. cheap
B. difficult
C. easy
D. reasonable

15. Pretty is as pretty does means:

A. good acts make people look good
B. pretty things make people look good
C. good people like good things
D. good looks don't help tell what a person is like

16. To be weak-kneed means to:

A. be a coward
B. tire easily
C. be very nervous
D. walk funny

17. As fresh as a daisy means:

A. neat and clean
B. just picked
C. well-rested
D. ready for action

18. To have a ghost of a chance means to have:

A. the best odds
B. a good idea
C. one more try
D. some possible hope

19. In the nick of time means:

A. at the last moment
B. in time past
C. in small lengths of time
D. for the first time

20. Lost his shirt means he lost:

A. any chance at a job
B. everything in his possession
C. most of his clothing
D. all of his remaining years

21. Her mind is like an open book means she:

A. is not a deep thinker
B. tells you what she has read
C. makes a joke about secrets
D. has no private thoughts

22. Going Dutch treat means:

A. eating alone
B. paying one's own way
C. enjoying a good meal
D. tasting different foods

23. In the morning the city spread its wings means the city became:

A. noisy
B. busy
C. crowded
D. bigger

24. Out like a light means to:

A. turn the switch
B. stop shining
C. leave quickly
D. be unconscious

25. Leaked the word means:

A. printed the news
B. spread a lie
C. suggested a story
D. told the secret

Go on to Part II

Part II

Directions: Read each item carefully and notice the underlined figure of speech. Then choose the meaning for each figure of speech as it is used in the sentence. Record your choice on the answer sheet. Two examples are given below.

Examples:

Mary was loved by all for she had a heart of gold. Mary was:

A. honest
B. rich
(C.) kind
D. dependable

Joe asked them to give it to him straight. Joe wanted:

A. some help
(B.) the truth
C. a good price
D. something fixed

Begin Part II

26. It had been a rough day and now Bill was climbing the wall because his car had a flat tire. Bill was:

A. tired
B. excited
C. upset
D. trapped

27. It was not her day and Ella was fit to be tied. Ella was:

A. angry
B. uneasy
C. disappointed
D. sad

28. Ann learned it through a slip of the tongue. She learned it:

A. through a mistake
B. by listening carefully
C. through gossip
D. by herself

29. In bad times, don't count on him for he has a backbone of jello. He:

A. has a weak back
B. acts very cowardly
C. gets very nervous
D. breaks all his promises

30. Love is blind; so two people in love only see:

A. one another's good points
B. each other
C. beauty in everything
D. mistakes in others

31. That tree is as timeless as the waves. It is:

A. fading away
B. part of nature
C. getting old
D. ageless

32. Your life lies in your hands, so you are responsible for your:

A. future
B. health
C. character
D. past

33. Flies, like some people, come to parties uninvited. Some people are:

A. disturbing
B. thoughtless
C. unwelcome
D. pushy

34. Students think that Larry is better than a run-of-the-mill coach. They think he is:

A. a fair coach
B. an average coach
C. a poor coach
D. an outstanding coach

35. Carol had a good day. She was in fine fettle. Carol was:

A. tired
B. working
C. busy
D. happy

36. "You're wrong," Pedro said. "What you're saying doesn't hold water!" Pedro meant it showed:

A. little honesty
B. poor thinking
C. harmful teasing
D. rude actions

37. Sam said, "I'm going to give you a piece of my mind." Archie replied, "Where will you get it?" Archie was trying to be:

A. childish
B. mean
C. angry
D. funny

38. Howard did not measure up to the task. This means he:

A. was not able to do it
B. did not have tools to do it
C. was not tall enough
D. did not find it interesting

39. Martha said, "I have to hand it to you. You were right." Martha meant she had to:

A. give him credit
B. offer him help
C. teach him no longer
D. thank him again

40. They were all squared away. It would not be long now before they could leave. They had gotten:

A. started
B. finished
C. ready
D. together

41. Cecil could not keep her in line. She paid no attention to him. She wouldn't:

A. follow his orders
B. correct her mistakes
C. answer his questions
D. finish her work

42. His salad days long gone, Abe would rather look at his past than at his future. Salad days means:

A. first few years
B. youthful years
C. middle age
D. old age

43. My sister had a hard life. People said she lived with the mother of miseries. She was:

A. unlucky
B. poor
C. unhappy
D. stubborn

44. Willie is thoughtful, and he will give up an arm and a leg for others. Willie is:

A. sometimes foolish
B. often sincere
C. unusually helpful
D. seldom anxious

45. Cathy's headache was a big one! Even a short visit to the land of Nod didn't help. Cathy had been:

A. taking medicine
B. visiting a doctor
C. attending a party
D. taking a nap

46. Rosa's boss thinks she is a good worker and she has been given almost a free hand. At work Rosa can:

A. act as her own boss
B. get things without paying
C. set her own pay
D. help the slower workers

47. Don blows hot and cold. One minute he's for you and the next minute he's against you. Don:

A. holds two opinions at the same time
B. has problems with people
C. keeps changing his mind
D. tries to agree with all

48. Jesse made money in the black market until he was caught. The black market is:

A. a night market
B. a street market
C. an unlawful market
D. a late market

49. For a time Sarah felt bad about what she had done, but now she has hardened her heart. Now she is:

A. not sorry about it
B. pleased about it
C. sorry about it
D. worried about it

50. One day Mike had to cool his heels until his boss could see him. Mike had to:

A. work hard
B. sit quietly
C. wait patiently
D. remove his shoes

SMITH/PALMER

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION TEST

FORM B

Part I

Directions: Read each item carefully. You will see that the part containing a figure of speech is underlined. Choose the most common meaning for each figure of speech. Record your choice on the answer sheet. Two examples are given below.

Examples:

To have a heart of gold means to be:

(A.) kind
B. heavy
C. rich
D. hard

To give it to him straight means to:

A. deliver it yourself
B. pay him right now
C. send it unfolded
(D.) tell him the truth

Begin Part I

1. High on the hog means:

A. high places
B. smelly rooms
C. really good living
D. delicious meat

2. A shady lady means a woman who:

A. is selfish
B. shows curiosity
C. has a questionable character
D. keeps cool and calm

3. The world's my oyster means:

A. I have control
B. I need nothing
C. I'm hard to reach
D. I'm hard to please

4. Get on the stick means:

   A. take on your duties
   B. ask for directions
   C. pay close attention
   D. work with care

5. Looked at him with fish eyes means with:

   A. distrust
   B. question
   C. surprise
   D. sadness

6. Small potato means:

   A. unimportant
   B. uninteresting
   C. unnoticed
   D. unlucky

7. Has her head in the clouds means:

   A. daydreaming
   B. sleeping
   C. walking
   D. flying

8. Walking on air means feeling:

   A. impatient
   B. careful
   C. joyful
   D. careless

9. He's a saint means he's a person who is:

   A. especially nice
   B. often gentle
   C. usually honest
   D. almost perfect

10. Like throwing pearls before swine means:

   A. spending money too freely
   B. giving fine things which are not appreciated
   C. giving people more than they need
   D. treating people as though they were dull

11. A dead-end job means a job that:

   A. has no future
   B. pays very little
   C. requires no special training
   D. requires a lot of sitting

12. Over the hill means:

A. completing a difficult climb
B. having your best years behind you
C. finishing all that had to be done
D. becoming unhappy in your work

13. To set him straight means to:

A. tell him the facts
B. give him directions
C. offer an opinion
D. write him the news

14. A horse of a different color means that it is:

A. another problem
B. a strange problem
C. a mixed-up problem
D. a difficult problem

15. That's her strong suit means that is her best:

A. appearance
B. point
C. work
D. answer

16. The child is a handful means the child is:

A. difficult to understand
B. hard to control
C. eager to please
D. heavy to lift

17. Saw the light means:

A. woke up
B. recognized the truth
C. found a way
D. made a decision

18. His ship never came in means he:

A. didn't have a chance
B. missed the boat
C. didn't make his fortune
D. waited too long

19. A pie in the sky means a:

A. dream
B. high aim
C. strange experience
D. harvest moon

20. Her eyes played tricks on her means she:

A. was unsure of what she saw
B. saw double of everything
C. needed to wear glasses
D. couldn't stop blinking

21. In frozen silence means:

A. quiet and shivering
B. unable to move
C. unable to speak
D. very frightened

22. Swallowed the story means:

A. believed the story
B. listened to the story
C. disliked the story
D. liked the story

23. To talk like a broken record means to:

A. say the same thing over and over
B. have an unclear voice
C. have a scratchy voice
D. never keep still

24. My final hour has come means:

A. I'm finishing work
B. I've reached my goal
C. I'm through for now
D. I haven't long to live

25. The eye of the storm means the:

A. clouds of the storm
B. center of the storm
C. end of the storm
D. edge of the storm

Go on to Part II

Part II

Directions: Read each item carefully and notice the underlined figure of speech. Then choose the meaning for each figure of speech as it is used in the sentence. Record your choice on the answer sheet. Two examples are given below.

Examples:

Mary was loved by all for she had a heart of gold. Mary was:

A. honest
B. rich
(C) kind
D. dependable

Joe asked them to give it to him straight. Joe wanted:

A. some help
(B) the truth
C. a good price
D. something fixed

Begin Part II

26. Frank was as green as grass on the job because he was without experience. Frank was:

A. very nervous
B. a little confused
C. new to the work
D. somewhat worried

27. The morning hour has gold in its mouth. The morning hour is:

A. a quiet hour
B. a happy hour
C. a useful hour
D. an early hour

28. Stan learned that time waits for no man. Stan learned to:

A. use his time wisely
B. be on time
C. work till the job was done
D. watch the clock

29. Few people like him for he has a machine for a heart. He is a person who:

A. often is cruel
B. rarely is warm
C. never shows feelings
D. usually is thoughtless

30. Ron is a hard-headed man. He is:

A. strong
B. foolish
C. stubborn
D. mean

31. People don't like Doris, but they respect her for her word is her bond. Doris is:

A. strong-willed
B. careful
C. talkative
D. dependable

32. Nothing seems to go right for Phil and he is always up in arms about something. He is always:

A. excited
B. worried
C. nervous
D. upset

33. People are afraid to ask her for help. They think she has a heart of stone. They think she is:

A. dangerous
B. cruel
C. crazy
D. thoughtless

34. Some people shake their heads and say that he is softheaded. They think he is:

A. crazy
B. forgetful
C. weak-minded
D. childish

35. Though they were sisters, they were as day and night. They were:

A. alike
B. different
C. changeable
D. equal

36. Just by listening to the two of them, you could see that they were painted with the same brush. They were:

A. very mucn alike
B. both young
C. sisters
D. relatives

37. George was wrong this time. He sounded like a donkey in a lion's suit. This means he:

A. behaved like a fool
B. acted like a child
C. didn't show much sense
D. pretended to be someone else

38. Nan smiled. They thought they had her; but she had a card up her sleeve. Nan had:

A. an ace
B. a special power
C. a hidden plan
D. a message

39. Betty said, "I'll go at it whole hog and I'll win." Betty meant she would do it:

A. through much thinking
B. with all her might
C. with great speed
D. by careful eating

40. Mark wanted to lie down. He said he had done the work from soup to nuts. He had:

A. eaten a big dinner
B. spent a tough day
C. done the complete job
D. worked by himself

41. Alice was always thrown in the shade by Maria. People admired Maria. Alice:

A. was made to sit under a tree
B. was jealous of Maria
C. did not do as well as Maria
D. did not like Maria

42. Janet won the checker game. That took the wind out of Joe's sails and he left. Losing the game caused him to:

A. be less proud
B. get angry
C. become sad
D. slow down

43. Susan says we should be of one mind. Then we would have peace. She means we should:

A. try to agree
B. act neighborly
C. help each other
D. work for each other

44. Paul asked Beth to lend him a hand. She said she had work to do. Paul wanted Beth to:

A. lend him money
B. do all the work
C. help him
D. leave her work

45. It was a clear, bright morning and Tom was feeling his oats. Tom was feeling:

A. sleepy
B. sick
C. healthy
D. lively

46. Laura was not afraid at the trial. She smiled when people looked at her. She knew her slate was clean. She knew she had:

A. done her best
B. done no wrong
C. gotten the best lawyer
D. made friends with the judge

47. David got what he wanted when he greased her palm. David:

A. held hands with her
B. bribed her
C. took care of her
D. had control over her

48. Chuck has a thick skin. He does not think of others and nothing seems to bother him. He is:

A. dangerous
B. unfeeling
C. unusual
D. strange

49. He has a mind like a sieve. Everything except rocks seems to go through it. He has:

A. a poor memory
B. an organized mind
C. a strong mind
D. a good memory

50. Ellen hurried home for it was the witching hour. It was:

A. midnight
B. noon
C. early morning
D. late afternoon